

Joint Press Statement: Guyana and Norway enter into partnership to protect Guyana's tropical forests

President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana and Norway's Minister of the Environment and International Development Erik Solheim today signed a Memorandum of Understanding declaring the two countries' determination to work together to provide the world with a working example of how partnerships between developed and developing countries can save the world's tropical forests.

"It will be impossible to defeat climate change if we don't significantly reduce tropical deforestation", President Jagdeo emphasized. "We said several years ago that the people of Guyana stood ready to play our part in determining how this can be done. We are delighted to work alongside Norway in searching for solutions that align the development aspirations of our people with the urgent need to protect the world's tropical forests."

"Through this partnership, we are building a bridge between developed and developing countries," stated Mr Solheim. "We are giving the world a workable model for climate change collaboration between North and South. It's not perfect, but it's good, and it will be improved upon as we learn and develop together."

Under the partnership, Guyana will accelerate its efforts to limit forest-based greenhouse gas emissions, and protect its rich rainforest as an asset for the world. Norway will provide financial support to Guyana at a level based on Guyana's success in limiting emissions. This will enable Guyana to start implementing its low carbon development strategy (LCDS) at scale. In the words of President Jagdeo, "We want to avoid the high-carbon development trajectory that today's developed world followed." The LCDS sets out how Guyana can limit forest-based emissions, convert almost its entire energy sector to clean energy, accelerate the development of low-carbon economic sectors and address the huge challenges the country is facing in adapting to climate change. As an illustration, 90% of Guyana's productive land is threatened by changing weather patterns, and in 2005, floods wiped out the equivalent of 60% of GDP.

Financial support from Norway will be channeled through a new fund, the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF). Guyana's Ministry of Finance will be responsible for the GRIF's operations, and a reputable international financial institution to be selected by Norway and Guyana will act as manager of the fund. The mechanism will ensure full national and international oversight of financial flows."

"Saving the world's remaining tropical forests is a crucial element in the battle against climate change, and we are proud to support Guyana's contributions in that effort", said Mr Solheim. "We are committed to contributing 30 million dollars to support the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund in 2010. Provided that the expected results are achieved and that other elements of the partnership fall into place, our support for the years up to 2015 could add up to as much as USD 250 million."

President Jagdeo said, "Addressing climate change can no longer be just about campaigning for action. It must also be about designing solutions and delivering results. This will not happen as long as developing countries are treated as passive recipients of aid. Instead, we need to be equal partners in the search for solutions. When we find solution-oriented partners like Norway, we will not be found unwilling. And this is not just about Guyana and Norway."

The Informal Working Group on Interim Finance for REDD+ has set out a frame-work for others to join us in achieving a 25% reduction in global deforestation and forest degradation by 2015 for less than 25 billion euro. If successful, this would be the single biggest contribution to combating climate change during this period.”

Three years ago President Jagdeo said that Guyana might be willing to place its entire rainforest under long-term protection “to help in the world’s fight against climate change, providing our peoples’ sovereignty is respected.” At the signing of the MOU, which took place in the indigenous community of Fairview, the President said “that goal just came closer.”

The Memorandum of Understanding and an underlying Joint Concept Paper can be found at: http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/MD/Vedlegg/Klima/klima_skogprosjektet.

Information on Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy can be found at www.lcds.gov.gy

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For additional information on the Informal Working Group for Interim Financing for REDD+, see:

http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/MD/Vedlegg/Klima/klima_skogprosjektet/Report_of_the_Informal_Working_Group_on_Interim_Finance_for_REDD+_IWG_IFR_October_2009_Final.pdf.